

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Status of the Application

Prior to entry of this amendment, claims 1-12, 14-27, 29-34, and 36-46 were pending. An Office Action, mailed October 7, 2008, rejected claims 1-2, 4-12, 14-16, 18, 21-27, 29-31, 33, 34, and 36-38 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 7,308,702 to Thompson et al. (hereafter “Thompson”) and rejected claims 3, 41-43, 45, and 46 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thompson in view of U.S. Patent No. 7,080,078 to Slaughter et al. (hereafter “Slaughter”).

The Office Action objected to claims 17, 19, 20, 32, 39, 40, and 44 as depending from rejected base claims, but indicated that claims 17, 19, 20, 32, 39, 40, and 44 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

This amendment amends claims 1, 22, 33, and 45. Claims 16, 17, 19, 20, 32, 39, 40, and 42-44 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and the Applicants reserve the right to reintroduce the amended or canceled claims, in their original form, in this or another application. This amendment also adds new claims 47-50. Hence, after entry of this amendment, claims 1-12, 14, 15, 18, 21-27, 29-31, 33, 34, 36-38, 41, and 45-50 stand pending for examination.

Amendments to the Claims

Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claims 16 and 17. Claim 22 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 32. Claim 33 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 39. Hence, claim 1 recites the limitations of claims 16 and 17, claim 22 recites the limitations of claim 32, and claim 33 recites the limitations of claim 39.

New claim 47 includes the limitations of claims 1 and 19, new claim 48 includes the limitations of claims 1 and 20, new claim 49 includes the limitations of claims 1 and 40, and new claim 50 includes the limitations of claims 1 and 42-44.

Claim Rejections

As amended, the application includes the following independent claims: 1, 22, 33, and 47-50. Claim 1 recites the limitations of former claims 16 and 17, claim 22 recites the limitations of former claim 23, and claim 33 recites the limitations of former claim 39, which, as the Office Action correctly perceived, is directed to allowable subject matter. Claims 1, 22, and 33, therefore, are believed to be allowable.

The Office Action further indicated that claims 19, 20, 40, and 42-44 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. New claims 47-50 recite the limitations of claim 1 and claims 19, 20, 40, and 42-44, respectively. Claims 47-50, therefore, are believed to be allowable.

Hence, all independent claims currently pending in the application are believed to be allowable. Dependent claims 2-12, 14, 15, 18, 21, 23-27, 29-31, 34, 36-38, 41, 45, and 46 are allowable as depending from allowable base claims and as being directed to specific novel substitutes. Consequently, all claims currently pending in the application are believed to be allowable, and a formal notice of allowance is respectfully requested.

Appl. No. 09/998,910
Amdt. dated January 6, 2009
Reply to Office Action of October 7, 2008

PATENT

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested. Applicants do not acquiesce to any argument not specifically addressed herein. Rather, Applicants believe the present amendments and argument overcome all rejections.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 303-571-4000.

Respectfully submitted,

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